

## State Commission

PennSERVE is providing AmeriCorps grants to 16 organizations across Pennsylvania totaling more than \$9 million in Corporation for National and Community Service funding. More than 1,200 individuals will enroll as AmeriCorps members, earning \$5.4 million in Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards to help pay for college or pay back student loans. PennSERVE programs serve both urban and rural populations. Pennsylvania is home to Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, and yet 48 of the state's 67 counties are considered rural. In 2014, PennSERVE placed 423 AmeriCorps members in Philadelphia public schools; 143 members in Pittsburgh schools; and 476 members across 27 rural counties. PennSERVE is proud of its ability to meet the diverse needs of Pennsylvania communities and the increasing interest in AmeriCorps funding in Pennsylvania. The Commission received intent to apply notices from 16 new organizations last year; two are now funded, and one has received a planning grant. In addition, PennSERVE has created separate competitive and formula application processes to allow new applicants additional time to apply.

## AmeriCorps State

PowerCorpsPHL in Philadelphia enrolls 136 at-risk and formerly adjudicated youth as AmeriCorps members. Members clear invasive species, plant trees, and construct berms and rain gardens to mitigate storm water runoff. Last year, AmeriCorps members improved 1,447 acres of public land to remove invasive species and debris; planted 1,760 trees; and collected 38 tons of materials to be recycled. While the effect on Philadelphia's parks is impressive, the effect on the members truly sets this program apart. The average recidivism rate in Philadelphia is 43 percent; the recidivism rate of previous AmeriCorps members is nine percent. The program provides extensive support to ensure members attain not only soft skills such as attendance and working as a team, but also find the supports they need such as housing, childcare, and food security. After service, AmeriCorps members receive intensive support from Philadelphia workforce partners to enter a job, post-secondary education, or enroll again in national service. Data from the past three cohorts shows that of the 190 individuals enrolled, 85 secured employment, 44 registered for post-secondary education, and 52 re-enrolled in AmeriCorps.

Compass AmeriCorps enrolls 24 AmeriCorps members to assist the refugee population in and around Pittsburgh. Compass works with resettlement agencies serving mainly Bhutanese, Iraqi, and Latino refugees. AmeriCorps members tutor refugees in English as a Second Language, instruct in citizenship and job placement, connect clients to social services, accompany clients to medical appointments, assist with food security, and reduce barriers to employment. Last year, members provided one-on-one services to 1,232 individuals. This included service to 477 individuals to assist them in receiving intensive medical services; assisting 312 individuals to enroll in health care plans; and providing at least 15 hours of job placement services to 421 individuals. The program's unique service opportunity attracts very passionate individuals from all over the country. Last year, the program received 95 applications for its 24 AmeriCorps member slots.

## AmeriCorps National

City Year Philadelphia AmeriCorps has 205 members who serve full-time at 14 schools, helping more than 8,160 students at greatest risk of dropping out. AmeriCorps members serve alongside teachers, using research-based tools to improve students' attendance, behavior, and performance in math and English. The members also lead afterschool programs and school-wide initiatives to improve school culture. Two out of every three D or F students who had individual support from City Year Philadelphia AmeriCorps members improved to C or better, and two out of every three D or F students who had individualize support in English improved to a C or better. City Year Philadelphia AmeriCorps members supported more than 2,400 students through before- and after-school programming.

College Advising Corps has 16 AmeriCorps members serving full-time as college advisors at 17 rural high schools in Pennsylvania. The AmeriCorps members are placed in underserved high schools and work to increase the number of low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented students who enter and complete higher education. The members provide the counsel and encouragement that students need to navigate the college admissions process. AmeriCorps members help students plan their college searches, complete admissions and financial aid applications, and enroll at schools that will serve them well. In 2015, these 16 members served 5,000 students, held 3,568 one-to-one meetings, and met with 3,385 students in group meetings. They helped more than 400 seniors register for the SAT or ACT and helped 1,037 seniors submit over 2,800 college applications. They have helped students amass more than \$8 million in scholarships and institutional aid for the coming school year.

College Possible Philadelphia, which serves 800 students, is closing Pennsylvania's degree divide and building a competitive workforce for the future. By 2020, 63 percent of jobs in Pennsylvania will require a post-secondary education, but only eight percent of low-income students nationally earn a college degree by age 24. College Possible Philadelphia's AmeriCorps coaches guide low-income students through all aspects of preparing for, applying to, and enrolling in college and support students all the way through college graduation. Students who are guided by College Possible AmeriCorps members have a 98 percent college admission rate and are 10 times more likely to graduate from college than their low-income peers. A 2013 Harvard randomized controlled trial found that students in College Possible's AmeriCorps-based program model had a significant positive increase in four-year college enrollment. By harnessing the power of national service, College Possible creates a better future for all Pennsylvanians.

# National Service Impact in Pennsylvania

The Student Conservation Association selected 10 AmeriCorps members to be interpretive rangers in the Allegheny County Parks System. Besides giving information to visitors, the rangers promote recreation in county parks through ranger-designed and led outings such as foliage walks, cultural programming, "skins and skulls" tabling, orienteering, survival skills, fireside chats, and astronomy events. Rangers rove popular areas, staff information tables at park events, monitored and report natural and human-made hazards, explain park rules, and serve as the face of the Allegheny County Parks Department. Before this program began, the nine parks of the Allegheny County Parks System had no one serving as emissary between park users and park management outside of administrative buildings. Over the course of a six-month season, the rangers offered 169 programs of their own design to 1,828 park users. They spoke with 7,706 park users while staffing tables at events, and an additional 16,816 users while roving trails, playgrounds, and picnic areas. By the end of the program several of the AmeriCorps members had job offers for positions related to their experience.

Up2Us Sports' Coach Across America program trained and placed 10 AmeriCorps members in Philadelphia in the past year. The members coached and led sports-based programming. They used mentoring and youth development skills to help young people learn life skills and improve health through sports. They served 1,228 youth at seven sites, mostly minority youth from low-income families. As they participated in the program, 72 percent of youth improved in physical fitness tests. Additionally, 90 percent of the youth improved in one or more positive internal attributes that contribute to healthy decision-making and 88 percent of youth reported that their coach was a good role model. This program is effective because it uses sports to engage under-represented populations into AmeriCorps roles and inspire in them a longer-term commitment to service. After they complete their service, half of the AmeriCorps member coaches plan to pursue careers and/or higher education in recreation or health fields.

One Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) Corps AmeriCorps member served this past year at East Central Pennsylvania Area Health Education Center in Lehigh. YMHFA is a certification course that introduces participants to risk factors and warning signs of adolescent mental health problems, focuses on the importance of early intervention, and teaches how to help adolescents who are in crisis or having a mental health or substance use challenge. The AmeriCorps member, who is a trained YMHFA instructor, certified 165 community members in the program. A three month follow-up survey revealed that YMHFA strategies helped 446 adolescents who struggle with a mental health challenge or illness. Berks County Community Foundation gave East Central Pennsylvania Area Health Education Center a \$6000 grant so that the AmeriCorps members could conduct YMHFA training throughout the county. The Center also created partnerships with Lehigh Carbon and Northampton Community Colleges, Carbon Monroe Pike Mental Health and Development Services, Lehigh County Department of Human Services, and St. Joseph Medical Center.

Youth Volunteer Corps has two AmeriCorps members who serve Philadelphia. Since the local launch in April 2015, the AmeriCorps members have engaged 67 youth – all of them disadvantaged – in 794 hours of service. These youth volunteers participated in 51 service projects for 12 local agencies, including The York House, Gift of Life Family Home, 8th and Poplar Farm, and United by Blue.

## AmeriCorps VISTA

Last year, Sheila DeYoung served as an AmeriCorps VISTA member at Washington & Jefferson College. Her primary responsibility was to design, develop, and implement the Volunteer Community Health Coach Program. This in-home care program involved having student volunteers trained and supported by Jefferson Hospital as Community Health Coaches, with the goal of supporting individuals in local communities with personal health and wellness plans upon their dismissal from the hospital. The purpose of these plans was to prevent avoidable and costly hospital readmissions for the patients. At the end of the 2014-2015 year, Sheila shared that the student health coaches were extremely successful in connecting their patients to various resources in the community, building strong relationships, and managing in-home modifications as a result of their chronic illness. The impact of this partnership is evident in from the results in the spring semester, when students decreased readmissions to the hospital by 90 percent.

AmeriCorps VISTA member Katie Morton served with the Urban Erie Community Development Corporation as part of the Allegheny College's Lake Effect Leaders VISTA project. Katie brought in a total of \$182,000 in cash resources to help develop programming and resources to support job training and work ready skills for disadvantage youth and young adults. The youth served by the program are refugees and immigrants from Bhutan, Burundi, Eritrea, Iraq, Kenya, Liberia, Somalia, South Sudan, and Tanzania. In her first year, Katie wrote a summer youth employment proposal, which was funded through Erie Community Foundation, providing 122 youth summer jobs. In year two, developed programming to increase youths' soft skills, mobilized community partners to host job fairs, created opportunities for field trips, and developed additional opportunities for youth to gain employment skills.

## AmeriCorps NCCC

Rebuilding Together Pittsburgh repairs and renovates the homes of low-income, elderly homeowners and individuals with physical disabilities. It unites people from all walks of life in an effort to rebuild homes and repair lives. During the spring of 2015, AmeriCorps NCCC members supported Rebuilding Together's efforts by replacing old windows with glass blocks, repairing a 25 foot section of retaining wall, replacing 25 square feet of bathroom tile, installing 50 square feet of laminate, and renovating a front porch by removing old paint and giving it a fresh coat. Members directly helped support the program's goal to provide affordable, eco-friendly housing. Their service has also allowed seniors to have full mobility in their homes that they haven't had in years. Veterans had repairs done on their homes for free after giving their time to serve and protect those in the United States. It has also allowed others in the community to see positive young adults doing great things in the name of service and has encouraged other young people to consider doing the same in the future.

York Habitat for Humanity (YHFH) has been helping families in York County to realize the dream of home ownership since 1985. In that time, the organization has completed one hundred builds, generating more than \$6.2 million worth of new or rehabilitated, affordable housing in York County. The program works with prospective homeowners who would not otherwise be able to afford a home and teaches them the skills needed to maintain the home and the importance of being an active part of their community. Three AmeriCorps NCCC teams were called to support York Habitat for Humanity's efforts. These teams primarily focused on tasks for the construction of new homes, rehabilitation of older ones, and warehouse and inventory management. Collectively, AmeriCorps NCCC members were able to support building on nearly ten homes. They learned how to install cabinets and trim, build forms for concrete, work with PVC pipe, and even texture ceilings with drywall mud. A person living in York making minimum wage would have to work 62 hours per week to afford basic housing. AmeriCorps NCCC members helped provide housing that is reasonably priced and accessible to low income families who desperately need it.

## Senior Corps Foster Grandparent Program

During the last school year, the Erie County Foster Grandparent Program placed 63 volunteers to support at-risk youth with success in preschools and schools. At Harborcreek Youth Services, a facility for incarcerated school-aged young men, Grandma Pat worked with a 17-year-old whose intellectual disability held him back from reading. He arrived not knowing all of the letters in the alphabet, and Grandma Pat worked with him every day for the nine months that he was there. When he was discharged from Harborcreek Youth Services, he was able to read at a first grade, third month level.

## Senior Corps RSVP

The RSVP of Lehigh, Northampton, and Carbon Counties has partnered with the local United Way's Alliance on Aging to focus on helping seniors age well in place. One-hundred RSVP volunteers serve nearly 600 older adults, enabling them to stay in the home of their choice for as long as it is safe to do so. RSVP volunteers deliver meals, assist with grocery shopping, take clients to appointments, and provide socialization and companionship by visiting with those who are isolated and lonely.

## Senior Corps Senior Companion Program

The Senior Companion Program of Philadelphia has operated for more than 26 years. In the past year, the Senior Companions have completed more than 9,000 home visits to nearly 200 homebound seniors. Consumers who receive visits from a Senior Companion report significant impacts; 93 percent said they were less lonely and 87 percent reported they felt more engaged. The impact the Senior Companions have on Philadelphia's older adults is not unnoticed. In April 2015, Senior Companion, Betty Robinson, received the 2015 Mayor's National Service Award by the City of Philadelphia for her outstanding service and commitment to volunteerism.

## Social Innovation Fund

The Social Innovation Fund (SIF) transforms lives by using evidence to find what works and make it work for more people. The SIF Classic and SIF Pay for Success programs harness the expertise of grant-making intermediaries to identify, evaluate and expand effective nonprofits serving low-income communities across America. The SIF programs working throughout the state are focused on issues including workforce development, healthcare for people living with HIV, and more. Within the first two years of Action AIDS' program implementation, 84 percent of enrolled clients have been retained in HIV care services. The Social Innovation Fund is investing \$224,348 and expanding the impact of seven nonprofits in Pennsylvania.